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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 2008

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Midway Atoll Visitor Program to Reopen in March

Honolulu — After a six year hiatus, Midway Atoll is being reopened to week-long excursions. Imagine yourself on a tiny island in the midst of the Pacific, surrounded by a million nesting seabirds and the remnants of a battle that changed the course of World War II, and within the largest marine conservation area in the world.

Oceanic Society, a nonprofit marine conservation organization, has been granted a permit by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and State of Hawaii to conduct educational tours to Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and the Battle of Midway National Memorial beginning in March. The refuge and national memorial also serve as the “window” to Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, the only site within the monument open to public visitation.

“We are very pleased to welcome Oceanic Society back to Midway Atoll,” said Barry Christenson, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge manager. “For the past several years, our visitor program has been limited to short, one-day visits by cruise ship passengers or veterans returning to commemorate the Battle of Midway. These longer visits will allow people to fully experience the wildlife spectacle and historic significance that make Midway so unique.”

“Midway is a living laboratory; its unique ecosystems are under constant study. Similar to the Galapagos Islands, Midway offers an unparalleled wildlife experience where birds and fish have little fear of people, allowing close observation,” said Birgit Winning, Oceanic Society’s Executive Director. “In addition to seeing thousands of albatross, visitors can observe the endangered Hawaiian Monk Seal, green sea turtles and spinner dolphins, as well as snorkel in pristine waters. Visitors will learn about the wildlife and history of the islands and have a chance to participate in restoration efforts during their stay. We appreciate the opportunity to return to Midway and working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service staff to introduce visitors to this unique wildlife haven of such historical significance.”

Oceanic Society will coordinate seven week-long trips to Midway Atoll in 2008 to foster public awareness of the importance and sensitivity of remote atoll ecosystems. Numerous provisions of the permit ensure the protection of Midway’s wildlife and historic resources while allowing visitors to learn about and experience this unique ecosystem. The guided tours will interpret both the biological and historic importance of Midway and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, and visitors will also learn of the cultural significance of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands for Native Hawaiians. For detailed information or a brochure, contact Oceanic Society, (800) 326-7491, or email office@oceanic-society.org, or visit www.oceanic-society.org.

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Established in 1972, the nonprofit Oceanic Society works to protect endangered wildlife and preserve threatened marine habitats worldwide. To foster public awareness, it leads educational and volunteer research expeditions, and conducts scientific research to foster its conservation activities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The agency manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, administers the Endangered Species Act, and enforces other wildlife laws.